

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0090

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 4163

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, CM

SUBJECT: CAMEROONIAN MINISTERS REACTION TO PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

REF: YAOUNDE 4116

1. WE SHOWED SECOND PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE (DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY) AT RESIDENCE FIRST TO ANGLOPHONE MINISTERS, OCTOBER 15, THEN TO FRANCOPHONES OCTOBER 29. ALL MINISTERS WERE INVITED, FOLLOWING ATTENDED: ANGLOS: TRANSPORT, RELATIONS WITH ASSEMBLIES, VICE EDUCATION, VICE TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION. THIS SHOWING WAS COMBINED WITH FAREWELL PARTY FOR MICHAEL KIMA, NEW DCM CAMEROONIAN EMBASSY WASHINGTON, AND WAS ATTENDED ALSO BY PAUL ENGO, CHAIRMAN DSB COMM OF LOS CONFAB; SANDY ATANGANA, NEW COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY/ADDIS ABABA (FORMER CHIEF OF STUDIES, DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SERVICES, FONMIN); AND DR. VICTOR NGU, VICE CHANCELLOR OF UNIV OF YAOUNDE.

FRANCOS: MIN FONAFF KEUTCHA, WHO HAD VIEWED FIRST DEBATE IN NY WHILE AT UNGA; MIN IN PRESIDENCY SENGAT KUO; MIN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY MAIKANO, CHIEF OF PROTOCOL HAPI TINA, DIRECTOR OF BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS MLLE. MAIRIE (WHO HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN IN RESIDENCE, SO FAR AS OUR INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY TELLS US); AND DIRECTOR OF INFO AND PRESS PAUL FOU DA, OFFICIALLY REPRESENTATING THE MIN OF INFO AND CULTURE.

2. REACTIONS WERE GUARDED AND DIPLOMATIC, THOUGH ANGLOPHONES, AS USUAL, WERE SOMEWHAT MORE FRANK THAN FRANCOPHONES.

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VICE MIN YANG, WHO AT 28 IS YOUNGEST MEMBER OF GURC, THOUGHT

THIS KIND OF CONTEST WAS FINE FOR US, BUT IMPOSSIBLE FOR CAMEROON, WHERE IT WOULD PIT PRESIDENT AHIDJO AGAINST OUTLAWED UPC.

3. WHEN EMBOFF ASKED FONMIN ABOUT PRESIDENT FORD'S REMARK THAT BLACK AFRICA HAS CONFIDENCE IN US AND ITS SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY, FONMIN REPLIED ONE COULD NOT TELL YET.

4. WHEN DR. AMIKANO CRITICIZED JOURNALISTS AS DESTRUCTIVE, SENGAT KUO DEFENDED THEIR ROLE AS DISSEMINATORS OF INFORMATION AND SAID THAT THEY PLAYED CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE ENABLING PEOPLE TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT.

5. ATMOSPHERE WAS SOMEWHAT WEIRD, E.G., DURING ARGUMENT OVER FIVE BILLION DOLLAR REDUCTION IN DEFENSE BUDGET, WHEN TOTAL GURC BUDGET IS ABOUT ONE-TENTH THAT; OR DURING CRITICISM OF US ROLE AS ARMS MERCHANT, AND ATTACK OF ADMINISTRATION'S ANGOLA EFFORT.

6. AMBASSADOR OFFERED PRIVATE SHOWING OF SECOND DEBATE TO PRESIDENT IN PALACE, WHICH HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN UP SO FAR. SHOWING OF DEBATE PROBABLY DID GOOD IN SHOWING MEMBERS OF GURC SENSITIVITY IN US DOMESTIC POLITICS OF ISSUES THAT DIRECTLY CONCERN THEM. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT WAS HIGH LEVEL ATTENDANCE, WHICH PROBABLY UNIQUE IN YAOUNDE, WHERE PROTOCOL ISSUED DIRECTIVE MORE THAN ONE YEAR AGO THAT ONLY ONE MINISTER IS TO REPRESENT GOVERNMENT AT NATIONAL DAY RECEPTIONS, AND WHERE MINISTERS GENERALLY TOO BUSY TO ATTEND ANY AMBASSADORIAL DINNERS SAVE THOSE GIVEN BY PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER FOR DEPARTING ENVOYS.
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